

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
COMMANDER AMPHIBIOUS SQUADRON FOUR
FPO NEW YORK 09501

FC4/(N2:rar)
05000
Ser 012
10 March 1970

REGISTERED MAIL

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ (Unclassified upon removal of enclosures)

From: Commander Amphibious Squadron FOUR
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09B9), Washington Navy Yard,
Washington, D. C. 20390

Subj: Command History (OPNAV Report 5750-1)

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12A

Encl: (1) Chronology of Highlights
(2) Basic Narrative

1. In accordance with reference (a), the Command History of Commander Amphibious Squadron FOUR for the calendar year 1969, consisting of enclosures (1) and (2) and Annex A to enclosure (2) is forwarded.

(b) (6)

Chief Staff Officer

Copy to: (w/o Annex A to Enclosure (2))
CINCLANTFLT
COMPHIBLANT
CHINFO
COMPHIBGRU TWO

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

COMMAND HISTORY 1969
COMMANDER AMPHIBIOUS SQUADRON FOUR
CHRONOLOGY OF HIGHLIGHTS

1-3 JAN All MED 4-68 units: LA SALLE, FREMONT, MULIPHEN, ASHLAND and GRANT COUNTY inport NAPLES, ITALY, for holiday visit and upkeep. All but ASHLAND making final preparations for PHIBLEX 8-69. ASHLAND undergoing voyage repairs making preparations to receive stern gate to replace one lost during PHIBLEX 7-69.

4 JAN LA SALLE, GRANT COUNTY, FREMONT, and MULIPHEN underway from NAPLES. LA SALLE enroute PORTO SCUDO for advance party lift, GRANT COUNTY enroute PORTO SCUDO for advance force operations, FREMONT and MULIPHEN as TG 61.1 enroute rendezvous with TG 60.2 and TG 61.5 for opposed transit to PORTO SCUDO, SARDINIA, as part of PHIBLEX 8-69.

5 JAN LA SALLE and GRANT COUNTY arrived PORTO SCUDO. LA SALLE landed advance party and proceeded to rendezvous with TG 61.1.

6 JAN LA SALLE rejoined TG 61.1. TF 61 less GRANT COUNTY refueled from CHIKASKIA. CHEWAUCAN refueled GRANT COUNTY in the Amphibious Objective Area (AOA).

7 JAN NBC news team transferred to LA SALLE from FORRESTAL to cover landing. VADM HEINZ (COMPHIBLANT) and LTGEN SCHNEZ (CHIEF OF STAFF, GERMAN ARMY) boarded LA SALLE via helo from USS LITTLE ROCK (CLG 4) to observe PHIBLEX 8-69 landing operations.

8 JAN D-Day PHIBLEX 8-69. Subsequent to Amphibious Landing Operations LTGEN SCHNEZ departed by helo for FORRESTAL. Italian Military observers boarded TF 61 units. VADM HEINZ and NBC news team transferred by helo to FORRESTAL. Italian observers rotated among ships for familiarization.

11 JAN Italian observers transferred ashore by boat.

15 JAN FORT SNELLING delivered replacement stern gate to ASHLAND in NAPLES, ITALY. TF 61 commenced early reembarkation of TF 62 in view of heavy weather forecast. Operations continued throughout the night.

16 JAN FORT SNELLING arrived PORTO SCUDO from NAPLES with replacement causeway sections for transfer to GRANT COUNTY. FORT SNELLING departed for CONUS. TF 61 completed backload.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Enclosure (1)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

17 JAN LA SALLE underway to assist merchant ship SS RIGEL (Panamanian Registry) 53 miles west of anchorage. YUGOSLAV merchant ship SUBICEVAC reported SS RIGEL sunk and 11 survivors rescued. USS DYESS (DD 880) joined search, along with VP aircraft. USAF C-130 also joined search, and all units continued search until dark with negative results. LA SALLE returned to anchorage.

18 JAN TF 61 less ASHLAND conducted live naval gunfire exercises on CAPO TEULADA Range. FREMONT underway to assist in recovering bodies from SS RIGEL that were sighted by USAF helo. FREMONT advised assistance not needed upon arrival. TF 61 units less ASHLAND departed PORTO SCUDO enroute replenishment rendezvous in TYRRHENIAN SEA and Riviera port visits.

19 JAN TF 61 less ASHLAND replenished from ARCTURUS, SYLVANIA and TRUCKEE.

21 JAN LA SALLE arrived VILLEFRANCHE; FREMONT and MULIPHEN arrived CANNES; GRANT COUNTY arrived GOLFE JUAN. ASHLAND remained in NAPLES completing repairs to stern gate. Captain J. F. HANSEN, USN, relieved Captain H. L. MATTHEWS, USN as Commanding Officer, USS LA SALLE (LPD 3).

21-31 JAN TF 61 less ASHLAND in Riviera ports.

1 FEB TF 61 less ASHLAND underway from Riviera ports for LIVORNO, ITALY.

3 FEB TF 61 less ASHLAND arrived LIVORNO and commenced selective debarkation of TF 62 equipment for repair at Camp Darby.

5 FEB ASHLAND underway from NAPLES enroute LIVORNO.

6 FEB ASHLAND arrived LIVORNO.

7 FEB UDT 21-3 transferred to ASHLAND.

12 FEB LA SALLE and ASHLAND shifted to anchorage outside LIVORNO breakwater to debark TF 62 vehicles for repair and commence return of ASHLAND's combat load. Heavy swells hampered operations in the afternoon. Four men were washed overboard from MULIPHEN LCM 6 near breakwater. Three were recovered immediately, but fourth (USMC) was not recovered. Extensive search efforts by naval and local Italian authorities conducted until evening of 14 February with negative results.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

14 FEB Completed backload of all TF 62 equipment.

15 FEB TF 61 underway from LIVORNO enroute NAVPLION, GREECE for PHIBLEX 9-69.

17 FEB TF 61 transited STRAITS of MESSINA. TF 61 replenished from SYLVANIA and DENEbola. ASHLAND detached to proceed to NAVPLION to conduct advance force operations.

20 FEB ASHLAND arrived NAVPLION and commenced advance force operations. TG 61.1 less ASHLAND and GRANT COUNTY rearmed from DIAMOND HEAD. LA SALLE rendezvoused with TALBOT to receive FORRESTAL's Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) and Mr. Anthony HARRIGAN, Assistant Editor, Charleston News and Courier, CHARLESTON, South Carolina.

21 FEB D-Day for PHIBLEX 9-69.

22 FEB Captain J. F. RILEY, USN, relieved Captain J. B. DRACHNIK, USN, as Commander Amphibious Squadron FOUR. Captain DRACHNIK and Mr. HARRIGAN departed for Athens.

28 FEB Commenced reembarkation of TF 62.

3 MAR Completed reembarkation of TF 62. TF 61 underway late afternoon for port visits, FREMONT and GRANT COUNTY to CORFU, LA SALLE, MULIPHEN and ASHLAND to PATRAS, GREECE.

5 MAR TF 61 arrived GREEK ports.

5-11 MAR TF 61 inport CORFU and PATRAS, GREECE.

12 MAR TF 61 underway from Greek ports enroute replenishment rendezvous and Spanish ports.

14 MAR TF 61 transited STRAITS of MESSINA. TG 63.1 replenished TF 61 in southwestern TYRRHENIAN SEA. Upon completion GRANT COUNTY detached to proceed to MALAGA.

16 MAR TF 61 less GRANT COUNTY and ASHLAND conducted surface shoot in OP AREA 16. Tow services were provided by ESCAPE. Upon completion FREMONT detached to join GRANT COUNTY enroute MALAGA.

18 MAR LA SALLE, MULIPHEN and ASHLAND arrived VALENCIA, SPAIN. FREMONT and GRANT COUNTY arrived MALAGA, SPAIN.

18-26 MAR TF 61 inport VALENCIA and MALAGA.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

21 MAR COMPHIBRON FOUR activated as CATF, assuming responsibilities as coordination authority for the Conduct and Planning for PHIBFORSIXTHFLT (MED) 2-69.

27 MAR LA SALLE, MULIPHEN and ASHLAND underway from VALENCIA enroute ROTA. GRANT COUNTY underway from MALAGA enroute GIBRALTAR.

28 MAR FREMONT underway from MALAGA and GRANT COUNTY underway from GIBRALTAR. All units refueled from PAWCATUCK afternoon of 28 MAR.

29 MAR TF 61 arrived ROTA for port visit/turnover.

2 APR COMPHIBRON FOUR was relieved by COMPHIBRON SIX as CTF 61. Commanding Officer BLT 1/2 was relieved by Commanding Officer BLT 3/6 as CTF 62. MED 4-68 units sortied ROTA enroute CONUS in two movement elements LA SALLE, FREMONT and MULIPHEN in the Fast Movement Element and ASHLAND and GRANT COUNTY in the Slow Movement Element. MED 4-68 units chopped to COMSECONDFLT as TU 27.4.6.

13 APR Fast Movement Element arrived MOREHEAD CITY, North Carolina, chopped to COMPHIBLANT and activated as TU 44.2.6.

14 APR Slow Movement Element arrived MOREHEAD CITY, North Carolina, chopped to COMPHIBLANT. TU 27.4.6 dissolved. Fast movement element arrived NORFOLK/LCREEK Virginia. Captain C. N. PIEROZZI, USN, relieved Captain J. D. EXUM, USN, as Commanding Officer, USS RANKIN (LKA 103).

15 APR Slow Movement Element arrived NORFOLK/LCREEK, Virginia. TU 44.2.6 dissolved.

28 APR COMPHIBRON FOUR shifted his staff from USS LA SALLE (LPD 3) to Building 2001, U. S. Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Virginia.

1 MAY PHIBFORSIXTHFLT 2-69 Initial Planning Conference held at NAMS auditorium, Little Creek.

2 MAY Captain Lloyd N. HOOVER, USN, relieved Captain Eugene M. MASICA, USN, as Commanding Officer, USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA 249). Commander R. W. MALONE, USN, relieved Commander J. W. RICHMOND, USN, as Commanding Officer, USS DONNER (LSD 20).

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

23-25 JUN COMPHIBRON FOUR embarked in DONNER and activated as CTG 44.7 to conduct Type Training exercises for MED 2-69 ships. Training included tactical exercises, sinking of a target hull (EX-USS BEALE (DD 471)) in VACAPES OPAREAS and Amphibious exercises on Little Creek (ANZIO) beaches.

30 JUN COMPHIBRON FOUR broke his pennant in USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA 249).

11 JUL Presail conference for PHIBFORSIXTHFLT 2-69 held at NAMS auditorium, Little Creek.

22 JUL MED 2-69 units as TU 44.2.5 sortied from NORFOLK/LITTLE CREEK enroute MOREHEAD CITY, North Carolina to embark BLT 1/6.

23 JUL Arrived MOREHEAD CITY, North Carolina, embarked BLT 1/6 and sortied for ROTA, SPAIN. Chopped to COMSECONDFLT. TU 44.2.5 dissolved, TU 27.3.2 activated.

5 AUG Chopped to CINCUSNAVEUR/COMSIXTHFLT. TU 27.3.2 dissolved and TG 61.8 activated. Arrived ROTA, SPAIN. COMPHIBRON FOUR relieved COMPHIBRON SIX as CTF 61. CO, BLT 1/6 relieved BLT 3/6 as CTF 62. Commander William A. ROBINSON, USN, relieved Commander James J. RIDGE, USN, as Commanding Officer, USS ASHLAND (LSD 1).

6 AUG ASHLAND underway independently for PHIBLEX 2-70 advance force operations at PORTO SCUDO, SARDINIA. Other TF 61 units underway to conduct opposed transit enroute PORTO SCUDO for PHIBLEX 2-70. Rendezvoused with GEARING and MASSEY in the PM and commenced the opposed transit.

7 AUG TF 61 enroute PORTO SCUDO. CLAUDE RICKETTS with COMDESRON SIXTEEN embarked and ALLEN M. SUMNER joined screen. TF 61 units and screening ships refueled from PAWCATUCK.

8 AUG ASHLAND arrived PORTO SCUDO and commenced advance force operations. McCLOY joined screen.

9 AUG TF 61 less ASHLAND arrived PORTO SCUDO. Conducted rehearsal landing.

10 AUG D-Day for PHIBLEX 2-70.

15 AUG TF 61 replenished from SYLVANIA and ARCTURUS in AOA.

16 AUG TF 61 conducted exercises at anchor and commenced selective reembarkation of TF 62.

17 AUG Commenced general reembarkation of TF 62.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

18 AUG Completed reembarkation and departed PORTO SCUDO enroute Riviera ports.

20 AUG TF 61 entered ports as follows for port visits: RANKIN - THEOULE; ASHLAND, MOUNTRAIL - CANNES; FRANCIS MARION, YORK COUNTY - VILLEFRANCHE; DONNER - BEAULIEU.

27 AUG TF 61 less FRANCIS MARION underway from Riviera ports enroute MARSAXLOKK, MALTA, for transfer of TF 62 vehicles, personnel, and equipment from MOUNTRAIL to YORK COUNTY, DONNER, RANKIN, and FRANCIS MARION. This transfer was necessitated by Project 703. FRANCIS MARION underway for ST. RAPHAEL, FRANCE, to participate in ceremonies commemorating the 25th anniversary of Allied landings in Southern France.

28 AUG FRANCIS MARION anchored ST. RAPHAEL. Selected units participated in parade in FREJUS, FRANCE, and honors ceremony in DRAGUIGNAN, FRANCE. Transited to TOULON in the PM for further participation in the 25th anniversary ceremonies.

29 AUG TF 61 less FRANCIS MARION enroute MARSAXLOKK. Refueled from PAWCATUCK in the PM. FRANCIS MARION conducted port visit in TOULON and participated in 25th anniversary ceremonies.

30 AUG TF 61 less FRANCIS MARION arrived MARSAXLOKK. ASHLAND proceeded to VALLETTA, MALTA. FRANCIS MARION underway in the AM for MARSAXLOKK. ASHLAND arrived VALLETTA and commenced port visit/tender availability.

31 AUG TF 61 less FRANCIS MARION and ASHLAND anchored MARSAXLOKK for offload of MOUNTRAIL. FRANCIS MARION enroute MARSAXLOKK.

1 SEP FRANCIS MARION arrived MARSAXLOKK. MOUNTRAIL completed offload in the PM and was detached to proceed to CONUS. TF 61 completed consolidation backload.

2 SEP TF 61 less ASHLAND transited to VALLETTA and commenced port visit/tender availability upon arrival.

2-12 SEP TF 61 port visit/tender availability VALLETTA. During the evening and early morning 5-6 SEP the combined rescue and assistance teams from all TF 61 ships and the USS OPPORTUNE (ARS 41) extinguished fires on the Maltese Freighter, KRISTINE PACE.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Enclosure (1)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

13 SEP TF 61 underway in the AM for PHIBLEX 3-70 at TIMBAKION, CRETE. Replenished in the afternoon from SYLVANIA, PAWCATUCK and CONCORD.

16 SEP ASHLAND arrived TIMBAKION early AM and commenced advance force operations. Other units arrived later.

17 SEP D-Day for PHIBLEX 3-70.

21 SEP Commenced ASHLAND/DONNER load shift in preparation for ASHLAND return to CONUS in connection with Project 703.

22 SEP ASHLAND/DONNER completed load shifts in the PM.

23 SEP TF 61 commenced backload of TF 62. YORK COUNTY replenished from NESPELEN at anchor. ASHLAND detached in PM to refuel from NESPELEN and proceed to ROTA, SPAIN, for turnover with FORT SNELLING and onward transit to CONUS.

24-25 SEP TF 61 enroute ATHENS, GREECE for port visit.

26 SEP - 2 OCT TF 61 inport ATHENS, GREECE.

30 SEP ASHLAND arrived ROTA, SPAIN and conducted turnover with FORT SNELLING.

1 OCT FORT SNELLING departed ROTA enroute BRINDISI, ITALY, for port visit.

3 OCT TF 61 departed ATHENS for port visits in southern Italian and Greek ports.

5-13 OCT TF 61 units conducted port visits as follows: FRANCIS MARION and DONNER - CORFU, GREECE; RANKIN - TARANTO, ITALY; FORT SNELLING and YORK COUNTY - BRINDISI, ITALY.

14 OCT TF 61 units underway from respective ports for replenishment rendezvous.

15 OCT TF 61 replenished and rearmed from CANISTEO, DENEbola, and NITRO. DONNER detached upon completion to proceed to SAROS BAY, TURKEY for PHIBLEX 4-70 advance force operations, other units proceeded to TIMBAKION for PHIBLEX 4-70 presail conference.

17 OCT TF 61 less DONNER arrived anchorages TIMBAKION. TF 61 chopped to NATO control, activated as TF 503 and rendezvoused with NATO support forces. Conducted presail conference aboard FRANCIS MARION in AM, departed TIMBAKION in PM, and commenced opposed transit phase of PHIBLEX 4-70 (DEEP FURROW). DONNER arrived SAROS BAY and commenced advance force operations.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Enclosure (1)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

20 OCT Rehearsal Day for PHIBLEX 4-70.

21 OCT D-Day for PHIBLEX 4-70.

22 OCT Conducted replenishment in AOA from CONCORD.

24 OCT Commenced reembarkation of TF 504.

25 OCT Completed reembarkation of TF 504. 1000Z PHIBLEX 4-70 completed, TF 503 reverted to national control and activated as TF 61.

26 OCT TF 61 underway in the AM enroute VALENCIA, SPAIN, for port visit.

27 OCT TF 61 directed by COMSIXTHFLT to proceed to holding area north of CRETE and await further instructions. Arrived holding area in the PM. NESPELEN joined TF 61.

28-31 OCT TF 61 plus NESPELEN remained in holding area and conducted underway training exercises.

30 OCT YORK COUNTY refueled from NESPELEN in PM.

31 OCT FORT SNELLING and FRANCIS MARION refueled from NESPELEN.

1 NOV TF 61 plus NESPELEN remained in holding area. RANKIN, DONNER, YORK COUNTY and NESPELEN detached to proceed south of CRETE to conduct refueling operations due to heavy weather in holding area. FRANCIS MARION and FORT SNELLING rendezvoused with USS ELOKOMIN (AO 55) in PM and replenished AVGAS.

2 NOV RANKIN, DONNER, YORK COUNTY and NESPELEN continued refueling operations south of CRETE. FORT SNELLING proceeded to join group south of CRETE after completion of replenishment with ELOKOMIN. FRANCIS MARION returned to holding area. DONNER was detached from southern group in the AM to join FRANCIS MARION for mail transfer. Weather improved in the holding area and RANKIN, FORT SNELLING and YORK COUNTY were directed to rejoin FRANCIS MARION and DONNER. Upon completion of refueling operations, NESPELEN detached to proceed to SOUDHA BAY for fuel lift.

3 NOV TF 61 underway in holding area. Received diplomatic clearance to anchor SOUDHA BAY, CRETE. TF 61 units anchored early PM, retaining four hour underway readiness condition.

4-6 NOV TF 61 anchored at SOUDHA BAY awaiting further instructions from COMSIXTHFLT. SECNAV and COMSIXTHFLT visited FRANCIS MARION 5 NOV.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Enclosure (1)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

7 NOV TF 61 anchored at SOUDHA BAY. SIXTHFLT readiness condition cancelled and forces directed to carry out SIXTHFLT OPSKED. TF 61 underway in PM enroute VALENCIA, SPAIN, for port visit.

11 NOV TF 61 arrived VALENCIA.

14 NOV DONNER departed in the AM enroute CARBONERAS, SPAIN, to commence advance force operations for PHIBLEX 5-70.

15 NOV TF 61 less DONNER departed VALENCIA enroute CARBONERAS to conduct PHIBLEX 5-70. DONNER arrived CARBONERAS and commenced advance force operations. FRANCIS MARION, RANKIN, and FORT SNELLING refueled from ELOKOMIN.

16 NOV D-Day for PHIBLEX 5-70. Shipboard and land operations viewed by Spanish observers from both ships and shore.

17 NOV FRANCIS MARION rescue and assistance team commenced salvage operations on 50 ft. fishing trawler which had sunk in CARBONERAS Harbor.

18 NOV TF 61 conducted replenishment from CONCORD and RIGEL in AM. Commenced selective reembarkation of TF 62 in PM. Reembarkation was secured after six hours due to deteriorating weather conditions. FRANCIS MARION continued salvage operations on trawler until weather precluded further work.

19 NOV TF 61 underway in the PM remaining within 15 miles of assault beach to ride out weather.

20 NOV TF 61 underway steaming within 25 miles of assault beach. Conducted helicopter resupply of TF 62.

21 NOV TF 61 returned to assault anchorages in AM and commenced reembarkation of TF 62. FRANCIS MARION completed salvage operations on fishing trawler.

22 NOV TF 61 completed reembarkation of TF 62. FORT SNELLING underway for port visit PALMA. RANKIN and YORK COUNTY underway for port visit GIBRALTAR. FRANCIS MARION and DONNER underway for port visit MALAGA, SPAIN.

23 NOV FRANCIS MARION and DONNER arrived MALAGA. RANKIN and YORK COUNTY arrived GIBRALTAR. FORT SNELLING arrived PALMA.

27 NOV FORT SNELLING departed PALMA for ROTA, SPAIN.

28 NOV RANKIN and YORK COUNTY departed GIBRALTAR AM for ROTA to arrive PM. FRANCIS MARION and DONNER departed MALAGA for ROTA.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Enclosure (1)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

29 NOV FRANCIS MARION, FORT SNELLING and DONNER arrived at ROTA.

30 NOV COMPHIBRON FOUR and MED 2-69 units relieved by COMPHIBRON SIX and MED 3-69 units. CO, BLT 1/6 relieved by CO, BLT 2/6. MED 2-69 units activated as TG 61.8 departed ROTA in the PM enroute MOREHEAD CITY, North Carolina, in two movement elements: FRANCIS MARION and FORT SNELLING in the Fast Movement Element; RANKIN, DONNER and YORK COUNTY in the Slow Movement Element. Outchopped from SIXTHFLT to SECONDFLT, dissolved TG 61.8 and activated TU 27.4.8.

10 DEC Fast Movement Element chopped to COMPHIBLANT, activated TU 44.2.6, arrived MOREHEAD CITY and offloaded BLT 1/6 embarked units.

11 DEC Fast Movement Element departed MOREHEAD CITY. Slow Movement Element chopped to COMPHIBLANT, arrived MOREHEAD CITY and offloaded BLT 1/6 embarked units. Fast Movement Element arrived NORFOLK/LITTLE CREEK, Virginia. TU 27.4.8 dissolved.

12 DEC Slow Movement Element arrived NORFOLK/LITTLE CREEK, Virginia. TU 44.2.6 and MED 2-69 dissolved.

23 DEC Lieutenant Commander Delma C. ROBISON, Jr., USN, relieved Lieutenant Commander Lester H. WICKS, Jr., USN as Commanding Officer, USS YORK COUNTY (LST 1175).

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

COMMAND HISTORY 1969
COMMANDER AMPHIBIOUS SQUADRON FOUR
BASIC NARRATIVE

On 1 January 1969, Amphibious Squadron FOUR was commanded by Captain Joseph B. DRACHNIK, USN, (b)(6) 1100.

Commander Amphibious Squadron FOUR was embarked in USS LA SALLE (LPD-3) in company with USS MULIPHEN (LKA-61), USS FREMONT (LPA-44), USS ASHLAND (LSD-1), and USS GRANT COUNTY (LST-1174) in NAPLES, ITALY, for a holiday port visit and tender availability.

The mission of Commander Amphibious Squadron FOUR is:

1. Military command and administrative control of ships and units assigned.
2. Operational control of ships and units assigned.
3. Exercise of such administrative functions as may be necessary in connection with units assigned.
4. Execution of such missions and duties as may be assigned by higher authority.

On 1 January 1969, Amphibious Squadron FOUR was composed of the following ships commanded as indicated:

USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249), CAPT E. M. MASICA, USN
USS FREMONT (LPA-44), CAPT C. F. TURK, USN
USS MULIPHEN (LKA-61), CAPT C. V. MERRELL, USN
USS RANKIN (LKA-103), CAPT J. D. EXUM, USN
USS ASHLAND (LSD-1), CDR J. J. RIDGE, USN
USS RUSHMORE (LSD-14), CDR J. B. MALLARD, USN
USS DONNER (LSD-20), CDR J. W. RICHMOND, USN
USS WAHIAKUM COUNTY (LST-1162), LCDR T. D. CHAMBERS, USN

On 1 November 1969, the composition of Amphibious Squadron FOUR was changed to consist of the following ships commanded as indicated:

USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249), CAPT L. N. HOOVER, USN
USS RALEIGH (LPD-1), CAPT F. F. PALMER, USN
USS RANKIN (LKA-103), CAPT C. N. PIEROZZI, USN
USS MULIPHEN (LKA-61), CAPT C. V. MERRELL, USN
USS DONNER (LSD-20), CDR R. W. MALONE, USN
USS YORK COUNTY (LST-1175), LCDR L. H. WICKS, JR., USN

The authority for this recomposition was CNO message 172007Z October 1969 and COMPHIBLANT message 221517Z October 1969.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

OPERATIONS

On 1 January COMPHIBRON FOUR with six ships (MED 4-68) remained deployed in the Mediterranean area as Task Force 61. All ships, USS LA SALLE (LPD-3) with COMPHIBRON FOUR embarked, USS FREMONT (LPA-44), USS MULIPHEN (LKA-61), USS ASHLAND (LSD-1), and USS GRANT COUNTY (LST-1174) were conducting port visits to NAPLES, ITALY, and making final preparations for PHIBLEX 8-69. USS ASHLAND (LSD-1) was undergoing voyage repairs and making preparations to receive a stern gate to replace the one lost during PHIBLEX 7-69.

During the period 5 to 18 January COMPHIBRON FOUR was OCE for Exercise PHIBLEX 8-69, a supported amphibious assault and live firing exercise conducted at PORTO SCUDO, SARDINIA. The amphibious assault was preceded by an opposed transit to the Amphibious Objective Area (AOA) on 5, 6, and 7 January. USS GRANT COUNTY (LST-1174) and USS OZARK (MCS-2) conducted advance force operations. VADM HEINZ (COMPHIBLANT), LTGEN SCHNEZ (CHIEF OF STAFF, GERMAN ARMY), and an NBC news team were aboard USS LA SALLE (LPD-3) for D-Day, 8 January, as BLT 1/2 was landed over a narrow beach by PHIBFORSIXTHFLT 4-68. The landing was unopposed. Various Italian military observers were rotated among ships during operations on D-Day.

From 8 to 17 January, BLT 1/2, Task Force 61 ships, and aircraft from USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59) and USS SARATOGA (CVA-60) conducted live firing exercises on CAPO TEULADA impact area.

Bad weather prevailed during much of PHIBLEX 8-69 and hampered advance force operations and air cover during the landings. Backloading of BLT 1/2 was commenced on 15 January, two days earlier than scheduled, due to deteriorating weather. Backloading was completed on 16 January.

On 17 January USS LA SALLE (LPD-3) went to the assistance of a Panamanian merchant ship, SS RIGEL, which had broken in two during heavy seas 53 miles west of the assault anchorage area. Upon arrival at the scene, the Yugoslav merchant ship SUBICEVAC reported SS RIGEL sunk and that SUBICEVAC had rescued 11 survivors. USS DYESS (DD-880), various VP aircraft, and a USAF C-130 continued the search for additional survivors until darkness halted operations.

On 18 January USS FREMONT (LPA-44) was requested to proceed to the search area. USS FREMONT (LPA-44) was later advised that her assistance was not needed. On the same day Task Force 61 units less USS ASHLAND (LSD-1) departed PORTO SCUDO to conduct underway replenishment in the Tyrrhenian Sea and then to proceed to the French Riviera for port visits.

Task Force 61 units visited VILLEFRANCHE, CANNES, and GOLFE JUAN from 21 January to 1 February. On 21 January Captain J. F. HANSEN, USN, relieved Captain H. L. MATHEWS, USN, as Commanding Officer, USS LA SALLE (LPD-3) at VILLEFRANCHE.

On 1 February Task Force 61 units departed the Riviera ports and proceeded to LIVORNO, ITALY, arriving on 3 February, to conduct port visit, upkeep,

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

and selected BLT 1/2 equipment maintenance at Camp Darby. The LIVORNO visit covered the period of 3 to 14 February. USS ASHLAND (LSD-1) completed stern gate repairs and departed NAPLES on 5 February rejoining the Task Force in LIVORNO on 6 February.

On the afternoon of 12 February four men were washed overboard from an LCM 6 from USS MULIPHEN (LKA-61). Three were safely recovered but the fourth, LCPL (b) (6), USMC, was not recovered. Extensive search efforts by Naval and local Italian authorities conducted until the evening of 14 February yielded negative results.

Task Force 61 departed LIVORNO on 15 February for NAVPLION, GREECE, to conduct PHIBLEX 9-69.

During the period 19 February to 3 March, Task Force 61/62 conducted PHIBLEX 9-69, an amphibious assault landing exercise at NAVPLION, GREECE. On 20 February USS LA SALLE (LPD-3) rendezvoused with USS TALBOT (DEG-4) to take aboard the Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) of USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59) and Mr. Anthony HARRIGAN, Assistant Editor, Charleston News and Courier, of CHARLESTON, S. C., for D-Day operations on 21 February. PHIBLEX 9-69 commenced with a night landing followed by training ashore for Marine elements and type training at anchor and at sea for naval units.

On 22 February Captain John F. RILEY, USN, relieved Captain Joseph B. DRACHNIK, USN, as Commander Amphibious Squadron FOUR aboard USS LA SALLE (LPD-3) at NAVPLION, GREECE.

Task Force 61 departed NAVPLION for port visits in GREECE on 3 March. USS FREMONT (LPA-44) and USS GRANT COUNTY (LST-1174) sailed for CORFU while USS LA SALLE (LPD 3), USS MULIPHEN (LKA 61), and USS ASHLAND (LSD 1) sailed for PATRAS. Task Force units remained inport from 5 to 11 March.

On 12 March Task Force units got underway for the Spanish ports of MALAGA and VALENCIA. USS LA SALLE (LPD-3), USS MULIPHEN (LKA-61), and USS ASHLAND (LSD-1) visited VALENCIA and USS FREMONT (LPA-44) and USS GRANT COUNTY (LST-1174) visited MALAGA from 18 to 26 March.

On 21 March COMPHIBRON FOUR was activated as Commander Amphibious Task Force (CATF) assumed the responsibilities as coordinating authority for the conduct and planning of MED 2-69.

Task Force 61 units at VALENCIA sailed for ROTA and USS GRANT COUNTY (LST-1174) departed MALAGA for GIBRALTAR for lube oil on 27 March. USS FREMONT (LPA-44) departed MALAGA, and USS GRANT COUNTY (LST-1174) departed GIBRALTAR for ROTA on 28 March. All Task Force 61 units refueled from USS PAWCATUCK (AO-108) on 28 March and arrived at ROTA on 29 March.

On 2 April COMPHIBRON FOUR was relieved by COMPHIBRON SIX as CTF 61. Commanding Officer, BLT 1/2 was relieved by Commanding Officer, BLT 3/6 as CTF 62. MED 4-68 units sortied from ROTA for CONUS. The transit was

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Enclosure (2)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

conducted in two movement elements. USS LA SALLE (LPD-3), USS FREMONT (LPA-44), and USS MULIPHEN (LKA-61) composed the Fast Movement Element and USS ASHLAND (LSD-1) and USS GRANT COUNTY (LST-1174) composed the Slow Movement Element.

The movement elements arrived in MOREHEAD CITY, N. C., on 13 and 14 April and in NORFOLK, Virginia, on 14 and 15 April. MED 4-68 was dissolved on 15 April. On 14 April Captain C. N. PIEROZZI, USN, relieved Captain J. D. EXUM, USN, as Commanding Officer, USS RANKIN (LKA-103).

On 28 April COMPHIBRON FOUR shifted from USS LA SALLE (LPD-3) to Building 2001, U. S. Naval Amphibious Base, LITTLE CREEK, Virginia.

From 1 May to 21 July COMPHIBRON FOUR and Commanding Officer, BLT 1/6, made preparations for MED 2-69 deployment.

On 2 May Captain Lloyd N. HOOVER, USN, relieved Captain Eugene M. MASICA, USN, as Commanding Officer, USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) and Commander Roy W. MALONE, USN, relieved Commander John W. RICHMOND, USN, as Commanding Officer, USS DONNER (LSD-20).

On 23 June COMPHIBRON FOUR broke his pennant in USS DONNER (LSD-20). During the period 23 to 25 June Task Group 44.7 commanded by COMPHIBRON FOUR and composed of USS DONNER (LSD-20), USS MULIPHEN (LKA-61), USS ASHLAND (LSD-1), and USS GRANT COUNTY (LST-1174) conducted type training which included tactical exercises, the sinking of a target hull (ex-USS BEALE (DD-471)) on 24 June in the Virginia Capes Operation Areas (VACAPES OPAREAS). During the afternoon of 25 June, COMPHIBRON FOUR hauled down his pennant in USS DONNER (LSD-20) and returned to Building 2001, LITTLE CREEK. COMPHIBRON FOUR departed Building 2001, LITTLE CREEK, and broke his pennant in USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) on 30 June.

On 22 July MED 2-69 units: USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249), USS MOUNTRAIL (LPA-213), USS RANKIN (LKA-103), USS DONNER (LSD-20), USS ASHLAND (LSD-1), and USS YORK COUNTY (LST-1175) sortied from NORFOLK and LITTLE CREEK, Virginia, for MOREHEAD CITY, North Carolina, to embark BLT 1/6. Embarkation was completed on 23 July and MED 2-69 units departed for ROTA, SPAIN. Transit was conducted from 24 July through 4 August.

On 5 August MED 2-69 units chopped to CINCUSNAVEUR/COMSIXTHFLT and arrived in ROTA. COMPHIBRON FOUR relieved COMPHIBRON SIX as Commander Task Force 61. Commanding Officer, BLT 1/6, relieved Commanding Officer, BLT 3/6, as Commander Task Force 62.

Task Force 61 departed ROTA on 6 August, USS ASHLAND (LSD-1) proceeding independently to conduct advance force operations for PHIBLEX 2-70 at PORTO SCUDO, SARDINIA; the remaining ships were joined on 6 August by USS GEARING (DD-710) and USS MASSEY (DD-778) and on 7 August by USS CLAUDE RICKETTS (DDG-5) (COMDESRON SIXTEEN embarked) and USS ALLEN M. SUMNER (DD-692) for opposed transit to PORTO SCUDO. Task Force 61 and screening ships refueled from USS PAWCATUCK (AO-108) on 7 August.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Enclosure (2)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

On 8 August, USS ASHLAND (LSD-1) commenced advance force operations at PORTO SCUDO and USS McCLOY (DEG-1038) joined Task Force 61 screen.

Task Force 61 arrived at PORTO SCUDO on 9 August and conducted a rehearsal landing and night steaming in the AOA.

On 10 August ships returned to their assault anchorages for a 0600Z H-hour. Task Force 62 (BLT 62) was landed on a narrow beach at PORTO SCUDO as USS LITTLE ROCK (CLG-4) and USS GALVESTON (CLG-3) furnished naval gunfire support and conducted live firing on CAPO TEULADA.

From 11 to 16 August, Task Force 61 units conducted exercises at anchor and underway in the AOA. USS DONNER (LSD-20) and USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) conducted ORI's. All ships conducted live firings at CAPO TEULADA.

Reembarkation of Task Force 62 commenced on 17 August and was completed on 18 August as Task Force 61 departed for Riviera ports.

Task Force 61 visited the following French ports from 21 to 26 August: USS RANKIN (LKA-103), THEOULE; USS ASHLAND (LSD-1) and USS MOUNTRAIL (LPA-213), CANNES; USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) and USS YORK COUNTY (LST-1175), VILLEFRANCHE; USS DONNER (LSD-20), BEAULIEU.

On 27 August all Task Force 61 units except USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) departed for MARSAXLOKK, MALTA, for transfer of personnel, vehicles, and equipment from USS MOUNTRAIL (LPA-213) which was scheduled for return to CONUS pursuant to Project 703.

On the 28th and 29th of August, units of PHIBFORSIXTHFLT 2-69, under Commander Amphibious Squadron FOUR, participated with the French Armed Forces in commemorating the 25th Anniversary of Operation ANVIL-DRAGOON, the Allied landings on the southern coast of FRANCE on August 15, 1944.

U. S. units participating in the ceremonies consisted of a Navy marching detachment from USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249), "C" Company from the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, the 17th Air Force Band, and a 49-man marching detachment from the 8th Army in Germany.

The ceremonies commenced on the morning of the 28th at CAVALAIRE, FRANCE, where General J. L. DEVERS, USA (RET), who was Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theatre of Operations at the time of the landings, lighted a flambeau, or torch, in memory of those who gave their lives during the operations. A total of nine flambeaux were lighted along the coast by veterans, both U. S. and French, who participated in the Operations.

A parade was held the same morning at FREJUS, a small coastal town between CANNES and SAINT TROPEZ, with the U. S. Ambassador to FRANCE, Mr. Sargent SHRIVER, as the guest speaker. Marching in the parade were the U. S. contingents listed above, and units from the French Army, Navy, Air Force, and Foreign Legion.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Enclosure (2)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

After the parade at FREJUS, a wreath laying ceremony was held at the U. S. Cemetery at DRAGUIGNAN.

On the evening of the 28th the ceremonies shifted to TOULON when at 2100 hours the nine flambeaux were carried into the town from USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) and participating French ships, and the large flame at the Monument aux Morts was lighted from them.

The Grand Finale for the ceremonies was a parade at TOULON on the morning of the 29th. The guest speaker for this ceremony was Minister DEBRE, the Minister of Defense for FRANCE. The most colorful parade began with an over flight of "Mirage" jet fighters. The parade was led by a company of Gendarmes on motorcycles, then followed by the U. S. marching units, and the French Armed Forces units.

Attending the ceremonies were a group of eleven U. S. retired Generals and Colonels who had participated in the landings, along with the daughter of General Alexander PATCH, the Commander of the U. S. 7th Army in 1944.

Task Force 61 units less USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) arrived in MARSAXLOKK, MALTA, on 30 August. USS ASHLAND (LSD-1) proceeded on to VALLETTA for tender availability and port visit while other units commenced offloading of USS MOUNTRAIL (LPA-213). USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) departed TOULON on 30 August and proceeded to MARSAXLOKK arriving there on 1 September. Offloading was completed the afternoon of 1 September and USS MOUNTRAIL (LPA-213) was detached to proceed to CONUS for decommissioning.

All ships of Task Force 61 less USS ASHLAND (LSD-1) transited to VALLETTA on 2 September for a port visit and tender availability period from 2 to 12 September. During the evening and early morning of 5 and 6 September, the combined rescue and assistance teams from all Task Force 61 ships and USS OPPORTUNE (ARS-41) participated in extinguishing fires on the severely burned Maltese freighter, the SS KRISTINE PACE.

Task Force 61 sortied from VALLETTA for TIMBAKION, CRETE, and replenished from USS SYLVANIA (AFS-2), USS PAWCATUCK (AO-108), and USS CONCORD (AFS-5) on 13 September. Upon completion of replenishment USS ASHLAND (LSD-1) was detached to proceed to TIMBAKION to conduct advance force operations.

During the period from 16 to 24 September PHIBFORSIXTHFLT, COMPHIBRON FOUR with USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249), USS RANKIN (LKA-103), USS DONNER (LSD-20), USS ASHLAND (LSD-1), and USS YORK COUNTY (LST-1175) conducted PHIBLEX 3-70 at TIMBAKION, CRETE. This amphibious assault landing exercise was unopposed and was followed by training ashore for BLT 1/6 and type training at sea and in assault anchorages for naval units. Training also included a coordinated evacuation exercise designed to test the effectiveness of PHIBFORSIXTHFLT/LANDFORSIXTHFLT evacuation plans.

PHIBLEX 3-70 was originally scheduled as a night landing exercise, however high effective surf forced a delay of H-hour to 0700Z September. The location

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

of World War II mines and large rocks uncovered by storm action, resulted in relocating the landing beach approximately 1000 yards north of that originally planned.

On 23 September USS ASHLAND (LSD-1) was detached from Task Force 61 to proceed to ROTA, SPAIN, for turnover with USS FORT SNELLING (LSD-30) and onward transit to CONUS for decommissioning pursuant to Project 703.

A port visit to ATHENS, GREECE, followed PHIBLEX 3-70. Task Force 61 remained at ATHENS from 26 September through 2 October. On 3 October Task Force 61 sortied for port visits in southern Italian and Greek ports. COMPHIBRON FOUR embarked in USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) in company with USS DONNER (LSD-20) conducted a port visit to CORFU, GREECE, USS RANKIN (LKA-103) made a port call at TARANTO, ITALY, while USS FORT SNELLING (LSD-30) joined Task Force 61 and together with USS YORK COUNTY (LST-1175) visited BRINDISI, ITALY.

On 14 October Task Force 61 units began their transit to TIMBAKION, CRETE, for PHIBLEX 4-70 (EXERCISE DEEP FURROW) presail conference.

Task Force 61 units replenished and rearmed from USS CANISTEO (AO-99), USS DENEbola (AF-56), and USS NITRO (AE-23) on 15 September. Upon completion USS DONNER (LSD-20) was detached to proceed to SAROS BAY, TURKEY, to conduct advance force operations for PHIBLEX 4-70.

At 0400Z on 17 October Task Force 61 chopped to NATO control and assumed the duties as Task Force 503. The presail conference was held aboard USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) the same morning and the operation commenced as Task Force 503 departed TIMBAKION and began the opposed transit phase of PHIBLEX 4-70. The amphibious assault force transit from TIMBAKION to SAROS BAY continued through 19 October. During the opposed transit phase, the Amphibious Movement Group, PHIBFORSIXTHFLT less USS DONNER (LSD-20), was screened by TCG GEMLUCK (DD-347) with COMDESDIV TWO TN embarked, TCG GAZIANTEP (DD-344), ITS IMPETUOSO (DD-588), HHMS NAVARINON (DD-63), and USS McCARD (DD-822). The Logistic Support Group (Task Group 503.5) was composed of two British AO's, and a British AEFS and AFS, which was screened by two U. S. destroyers, one Greek destroyer, and one Turkish destroyer. Advance force operations were conducted by USS SAMPSON (DDG-10), with COMDESRON FOUR USN embarked, USS DONNER (LSD-20), and six Turkish MSC's. (See ANNEX A). A rehearsal landing was conducted on 20 October.

H-hour for PHIBLEX 4-70 was at 0700Z on 21 October and Task Force 504 (BLT 1/6) was landed over a wide beach on the northern shore of SAROS BAY by COMPHIBRON FOUR with USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249), USS FORT SNELLING (LSD-30), USS RANKIN (LKA-103), USS DONNER (LSD-20), and USS YORK COUNTY (LST-1175). There was no live air support or naval gunfire support. All ordnance was simulated. The landing was opposed by a company of the Turkish Fourth Infantry Division.

On 25 October Task Force 504 was reembarked and at 1000Z PHIBLEX 4-70 terminated and Task Force 503 reverted to national control and activated as

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Enclosure (2)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Task Force 61.

Task Force 61 departed SAROS BAY enroute for VALENCIA, SPAIN, the morning of 26 October. On 27 October COMSIXTHFLT directed Task Force 61 to proceed to a holding area north of CRETE and await further instructions for possible contingency operations. Task Force 61 was joined by USS NESPELEN (AOG-55) the same day. All ships remained in the holding area until 1 November when USS RANKIN (LKA-103), USS DONNER (LSD-20), USS YORK COUNTY (LST-1175), and USS NESPELEN (AOG-55) detached to proceed south of CRETE to conduct fueling operations due to rough weather. USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) remained in the holding area as the other ships sailed for the area off TIMBAKION, CRETE. Weather improved on 2 November and all ships rendezvoused in the holding area north of SOUDHA BAY, CRETE.

On 3 November diplomatic clearance was granted to anchor in SOUDHA BAY. Task Force 61 units anchored early in the afternoon and maintained a four hour underway readiness condition.

Secretary of the Navy, John CHAFEE, and COMSIXTHFLT, Vice Admiral RICHARDSON, visited COMPHIBRON FOUR aboard USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) on 5 November as part of an inspection tour of U. S. Naval Forces deployed to the Mediterranean.

On 7 November SIXTHFLT readiness conditions were cancelled as Task Force 61 was directed to carry out SIXTHFLT OPSKED. Task Force 61 units got underway for VALENCIA, SPAIN, for a port visit. Task Force 61 arrived in VALENCIA on 11 November and remained until 15 November with the exception of USS DONNER (LSD-20). USS DONNER (LSD-20) got underway 14 November to proceed to CARBONERAS, SPAIN, to conduct advance force operations for PHIBLEX 5-70.

Exercise PHIBLEX 5-70 was an amphibious assault landing exercise conducted at CARBONERAS during the period from 15 to 22 November. It involved a daylight assault landing during which BLT 1/6 was landed by PHIBFORSIXTHFLT (COMPHIBRON FOUR with USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249), USS RANKIN (LKA-103), USS FORT SNELLING (LSD-30), USS DONNER (LSD-20), and USS YORK COUNTY (LST-1175)). The landing was opposed by a company from BLT 1/6 and the landing party from USS DONNER (LSD-20) which acted as simulated aggressors. H-hour was 0900Z on 16 November. The landing was followed by training ashore for Marine elements and type training by naval elements in the assault anchorage area.

On 17 November the rescue and assistance team from USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) commenced salvage operations of a 50 foot fishing trawler which had sunk in CARBONERAS Harbor.

Reembarkation commenced on 18 November, however, the evolution was secured six hours later as weather conditions deteriorated causing suspension of boating and salvage operations. On the morning of 19 November units were assigned to steam within 15 miles of the assault area to ride out the rough weather. On 20 November the limit was extended to 25 miles and Task Force 62 (BLT 1/6) was resupplied by helicopter.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

A two day extension of the exercise was granted due to rough weather. Task Force 61 units returned to their anchorages on 21 November to complete the reembarkation of Task Force 62 units still ashore and salvage operations on the Spanish fishing trawler.

Reembarkation was completed on 22 November. USS FORT SNELLING (LSD-30) sailed for PALMA, SPAIN, USS RANKIN (LKA-103) and USS YORK COUNTY (LST-1175) for GIBRALTAR, and COMPHIBRON FOUR in USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) and USS DONNER (LSD-20) for MALAGA, SPAIN. The port visits were conducted from 23 through 27 November. On 28 November all ships got underway for ROTA, SPAIN, and turnover with Amphibious Squadron SIX. USS RANKIN (LKA-103) and USS YORK COUNTY (LST-1175) arrived in ROTA from GIBRALTAR that same day.

On 29 November USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249), USS FORT SNELLING (LSD-30), and USS DONNER (LSD-20) arrived in ROTA.

On 30 November COMPHIBRON FOUR and MED 2-69 units were relieved by COMPHIBRON SIX and MED 3-69 units. Commanding Officer, BLT 1/6, was relieved by Commanding Officer, BLT 2/6. COMPHIBRON FOUR and units assigned to MED 2-69 departed ROTA that afternoon enroute to MOREHEAD CITY, N. C., in two movement elements. COMPHIBRON FOUR in USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) and USS FORT SNELLING (LSD-30) composed the Fast Movement Element while USS RANKIN (LKA-103), USS DONNER (LSD-20), and USS YORK COUNTY (LST-1175) made up the Slow Movement Element.

The Fast Movement Element arrived in MOREHEAD CITY and offloaded BLT 1/6 units on 10 December. Rain and fog delayed departure for NORFOLK and LITTLE CREEK until 11 December just prior to the arrival of the Slow Movement Element which offloaded that same day. The Fast Movement Element arrived in NORFOLK and LITTLE CREEK late 11 December as the Slow Movement Element departed MOREHEAD CITY to arrive the following day.

On 12 December MED 2-69 was dissolved.

On 23 December Lieutenant Commander Delma C. ROBISON, Jr., USN, relieved Lieutenant Commander Lester H. WICKS, Jr., USN, as Commanding Officer, USS YORK COUNTY (LST-1175).

ANNEX A CTF 503 OPORDER 3-69 (OPERATION DEEP FURROW)